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# EVIDENCE BASED INTERVENTION PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS AND THEIR PARENTS ARE NEEDED

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## Background

Children with a chronic illness (CI) are twice as likely to develop psychosocial problems as healthy children. To treat and prevent these problems a standardized group-based intervention program was developed in the Emma Kinderziekenhuis AMC, called 'Op Koers'. Based on cognitive-behavioural principles, children learn to use skills to help them cope with the consequences of their disease. In 2009 a multicentre- randomised controlled trial started to study the effectiveness of 'Op Koers'.



## Results

- Participants reported significant higher average scores for psychological problems compared to the norm group ( $p < .05$ ).
- Parents (CBCL,  $n=146$ ) reported significantly more internalizing and externalizing problems in their child, children (YRS,  $n=83$ ) only reported more internalizing problems.
- 61% of the parents reported their child to be in the clinical or sub clinical range, compared to 23% based on self report.



## Methods

- 1134 children with CI, and their parents, were invited to participate through an information letter, posters and pamphlets available at the clinics.
- During the first year 146 children applied, aged 8.0 till 18.9 ( $M = 12.15$ ,  $SD = 2.77$ ).
- Children and parents completed online questionnaires to assess baseline psychosocial functioning. Parents completed the 'Child Behaviour Checklist' (CBCL) and children the 'Youth Self Report' (YSR, 11-18).

## Conclusion

**There is a need for psychosocial interventions for children with CI, because:**

- A substantial percentage of children and parents, who applied for 'Op Koers', reported high levels of psychosocial problems.
- Parents reported more problems than their children. It is possible that parents perceive their child as more vulnerable.
- Many Dutch hospitals were interested to implement 'Op Koers'.
- To adequately treat and prevent psychosocial problems in children with CI, evidenced based intervention programs for parents and children are needed.